

MEEK NAMED RANKING MEMBER OF KEY HOMELAND SECURITY SUBCOMMITTEE

At the outset of the 109th Congress, I was appointed Ranking Member on the Homeland Security Committee’s Subcommittee on Management, Integration and Oversight. As a former Florida State Senator, State Representative and Captain in the Florida Highway Patrol, I was tapped by House Democratic leadership in the 108th Congress as the first freshman member of the then newly-created House Committee on Homeland Security.

The Committee on Homeland Security’s Subcommittee on Management, Integration and Oversight’s jurisdiction includes oversight of the Department of Homeland Security’s customs, airport and seaport security, staffing and other critical functions.

In this capacity, I am honored to have the opportunity to make an impact on so many issues of critical importance to South Florida such as port security, rail security, and first responder issues. I aim to assert the priorities and values of South Florida into the national debate on these issues.

I have pushed for more immigration and customs inspectors for Miami International Airport and the Port of Miami, which would help countless small businesses in our community that rely on trade. I have sought increased federal funding for South Florida’s fire and police first responders and local governments responsible for carrying out federal mandates. Recently, I offered an amendment to increase protections for those seeking asylum in this country. The legislation would have provided for specialized treatment for orphans, victims of domestic abuse and other vulnerable populations. Unfortunately, the amendment was voted down in the Republican-controlled House Committee on Homeland Security by a party-line vote.



Congressman Meek speaks at a press conference announcing a judge’s decision allowing Haitian orphan Ernso Joseph (left) to remain in the United States. Joseph, an orphan who landed off key Biscayne with other Haitians in October of 2002, fought for nearly three years for permanent resident status. Meek brought the case of the young Haitian to the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security personally, and has continually pointed out major shortcomings in the treatment of Haitian asylum seekers, especially those who are children.



Rep. Meek met with former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres to discuss peace efforts in the Middle East during Meek’s January 2005 visit to the region.

WAR IN IRAQ TAKING TOLL ON OUR VETERANS, NEW RECRUITMENT

At the cost of over 2,100 American lives, nearly 16,000 American wounded, and over \$300 billion, the war in Iraq is taking its toll on man, machine, and the American spirit.

However, there are also hidden costs in this war. The people who serve, and the equipment they need to do their jobs, are being worn out at an incredibly high rate.

Our military’s ability to deploy in support of contingencies to other parts of the world has been greatly compromised by the size, intensity and duration of our commitment in Iraq. Our troops and their equipment simply cannot sustain another conflict in their present condition.

Army and Marine Corps recruiting numbers have been falling short, and I believe we must improve the benefit structure for our troops and their families, particularly members of the National Guard and Reserve. I secured language that would provide our reserve forces with coordinated family services like financial education and child care while they are deployed, and family and marital counseling services and job-training for when they return.

That is why I supported an amendment in the Armed Services Committee to provide access to TRICARE, the military health care system, to all of our Reservists and Guardsmen. I also fully backed language to apply concurrent receipt of veteran retirement and disability payments without a phase-in period, and a

survivor benefit plan that did more to financially protect the families of troops who have given their lives in service to our country. Unfortunately, these amendments were turned away by the Republican leadership as being too costly.



Congressman Meek tours a military facility with U.S. Army Major General David Rodriguez in Mosul, Iraq. Meek recently returned from his second trip to Iraq, where he met with U.S. troops from Florida, military leaders and Iraqi governmental officials.

Additionally, I am an original cosponsor of the New GI Bill of Rights for the 21st Century. This important comprehensive legislation would improve benefits for our men and women in uniform today and provide long overdue benefits for the veterans and military retirees who have already served.

Instead, a policy of permanent tax cuts that largely benefit the most well-off in our society is being pursued, which according to the Congressional Budget Office, will cost the nation \$1.4 trillion over the next ten years. That figure dwarfs the combined sum of all veterans’ issues and the cost of the war to date.

Without giving these brave men and women the support they deserve, we will be unable to avoid the impending crisis in recruiting and retention.

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Official Business

M.C.
PRSRT STD

Congressman
Kendrick B. Meek

REPORTS from Washington

This mailing was prepared, published and mailed at taxpayer expense.

Congressman
Kendrick B. Meek
REPORTS FROM WASHINGTON

Florida’s 17th Congressional District

Dear Friend,

People throughout the country and around the world watched in horror as American citizens, forced from their homes by Hurricane Katrina, cried out for help from rooftops and were ignored for days by the federal government. Our community was also affected by Hurricane Katrina, but suffered an even more devastating blow from Wilma. Unfortunately, the response was not much better.

Our office worked to get ice and food to senior citizens, the disabled and people without transportation who were forced to travel many blocks to get help. At one point, I helped unload a supply truck myself when the process became bogged down. We had to push hard for blue roofs, damage inspectors, debris removal and temporary housing, and many of our citizens had to wait weeks to get power back on.

The federal government’s failed response to this hurricane season must be scrutinized to the fullest degree so that we can avoid such bureaucratic nightmares in the future. However, the Republican-controlled Congress refuses to allow an independent commission to investigate our government’s appalling response. Without a 9/11 Commission-like investigation, the American people will be deprived of the in-depth, non-partisan, objective information that we must have to credibly identify and correct what went wrong.

For this reason, I have cosponsored legislation to require a non-partisan, independent investi-

gation of hurricane response efforts. I have also introduced legislation to establish within the Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security the Special Office of the Inspector General for Natural Disaster Response and Reconstruction. This new office would help root out fraud, corruption and abuse during the recovery process. As a member of the House Homeland Security Committee, I feel it is important that we take action now to avoid the kind of waste, fraud and abuse that occurred after Congress appropriated billions for the Iraq war.

Following Hurricane Wilma, I asked FEMA to immediately provide Individual Assistance to individuals and households who suffered uninsured damage from the storm. Additionally, I led eleven other Members of the Florida Congressional district in seeking 100 percent federal reimbursement for city, county and state hurricane recovery costs, to ease the burden on local taxpayers.

Your views and comments on these and other issues of importance to you are welcome at any time. I appreciate the opportunity to represent you in the U.S. Congress.

Sincerely,

KENDRICK B. MEEK
Member of Congress



SENIORS NEED MORE TIME TO SIGN UP FOR NEW MEDICARE DRUG PLANS

November 15, 2005 was the first day Medicare beneficiaries could sign up for the new Medicare drug plans being offered. I find this process of wading through stacks of confusing brochures very troublesome. A recent poll found that nearly 75% of beneficiaries say having so many choices of plans makes it difficult to choose. I believe that beneficiaries deserve more time to make this important and potentially critical decision.

I have cosponsored the Medicare Informed Choice Act, which would give seniors and persons with disabilities an additional six months to make the best decisions possible and allow individuals to change plans one additional time in 2006 should a mistake be made or the beneficiary's needs change. While private insurance companies can change which drugs they cover whenever they like, it's not fair to restrict seniors to making changes only once a year.



Congressman Meek, along with other Members of Congress, speak weekly on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives on issues important to young people. These speeches, called special orders, focus on key issues to future generations of Americans like the national debt, Social Security and the situation in Iraq.

MEEK INTRODUCES LEGISLATION AIMED AT COMBATTING LUPUS

I have introduced the Lupus Research, Education, Awareness, Communication, and Healthcare (REACH) Amendments of 2005, which will enhance federal biomedical research on lupus, increase public awareness, and improve public and professional education.

It has been almost 40 years since the FDA last approved a drug specifically to treat lupus. Lupus is a prototypical autoimmune disease that causes

inflammation and tissue damage to virtually every organ in the body, including the skin, joints and vital organs such as the heart, lungs, kidneys and brain. According to the Lupus Foundation of America, the disease affects 1.5 to 2 million Americans and it disproportionately affects women of color. Of the nearly 4 million people in Broward and Miami-Dade Counties, they estimate that 21,538 men, women, and children may have lupus.

Experts estimate that of those who have lupus in Broward and Miami-Dade Counties, one out of five people are on disability. A large percentage of those with lupus are undiagnosed because it is one of the most unrecognized diseases in the country. I realize this is of particular importance to minority populations in Florida because lupus disproportionately affects African Americans, Hispanics, Asians and other ethnic minorities.

CONGRESSMAN MEEK USHERS IN NEW ERA AT POINCIANA PARK

Bringing meaningful and sustainable economic development to Liberty City, specifically to the Poinciana Industrial Park, has long been a goal for our community.



Rep. Meek; his mother, former Rep. Carrie Meek; (R to L) Miami-Dade College President Eduardo Padrón, and Miami-Dade County Commissioner Dorrin D. Rolle participated in the groundbreaking of the Poinciana Biopharmaceutical Park in Liberty City in June 2005. Congressman Meek recently announced a \$1 million federal grant for the Park.

This mission is well on its way with the recent groundbreaking of the Poinciana Biopharmaceutical Park, an important new public/private partnership.

This park will also be home to the Carrie Meek Biopharmaceutical Institute, a collaborative education center offering coursework in the bio-sciences from entry-level to doctoral work through Florida A&M

University and Miami-Dade College.

When complete, the Park will employ more than 1,500 Floridians in good-paying jobs and include more than 2.2 million square feet of research, development, manufacturing, classroom and office space; as well as retail outlets along NW 79th Street and housing for Florida A&M graduate students training at the Institute.

The Poinciana Biopharmaceutical Park complex is exactly the kind of job-producing investment that we have needed in Liberty City. I will work to ensure that our Liberty City community - our people and our businesses - benefit from this important project.



Congressman Meek regularly hosts students at the U.S. Capitol to discuss issues of importance that are pending before Congress. Students from Phyllis Ruth Miller Elementary School of Miami were among the many groups from the 17th Congressional district that traveled to Washington this year to meet with Rep. Meek.



Rep. Meek speaks with children about the medical care they are receiving at a U.S. military-built and run hospital in Gonaïves, Haiti in April 2005. Northwestern Haiti is recovering from the massive floods of the past two storm seasons.

HELPING HAITI

I have introduced several pieces of legislation concerning Haitians and Haitian Americans in the 109th Congress. Two of the most important measures are the Haiti Economic Recovery Opportunity (HERO) Act and the HRIFA Improvement Act of 2005.

The HERO Act would grant certain trade benefits to Haiti in return for political, economic and social reforms by the Haitian government. The bill will help create desperately-needed jobs in Haiti, and at the same time encourage the government of Haiti to make crucially needed reforms, especially in the justice system. The Republican leadership in the House failed to hold a vote on this critical legislation in the last Congress even though the Senate passed the bill unanimously.

In 1998, the Haitian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act (HRIFA) was signed into law. This original HRIFA legislation helped thousands of Haitians adjust their status to become permanent residents in the United States, but the federal government is now exploiting loopholes in the legislation to deport Haitians. That's why I have introduced the HRIFA Improvement Act of 2005. This new legislation would expand coverage to most Haitians who arrived in this country by air; forbid the government from deporting any Haitian with a pending HRIFA application; and require the government to reopen and reconsider applications for adjustment of status under HRIFA that are affected by the Meek amendments, among other provisions.

Keep in Touch...

Our 17th Congressional District includes portions of North Miami-Dade and South Broward Counties. To serve you better, I maintain three Congressional offices:

Washington, DC

1039 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: 202-225-4506
Fax: 202-226-0777

Miami-Dade County

111 N.W. 183rd Street
Suite 315
Miami Gardens, FL 33169
Phone: 305-690-5905
Fax: 305-690-5951

Broward County

10100 Pines Boulevard
Third Floor, Building B
Pembroke Pines, FL 33026
Phone: 954-450-6767
Fax: 954-450-6768

Please feel free to stop by, call, or fax. Also, you can visit my website, kendrickmeek.house.gov, where you can send e-mail to my office or sign up for my, E-Meek Update, a periodic e-mail newsletter on important issues that affect South Florida and the nation.